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ABSTRACT

Several modes of expressive arts may be especially appropriate for peace education and conflict resolution instruction in early childhood and teacher education classrooms. This paper explores the integration of the concepts and processes of peace education and conflict resolution through an examination of current research and professional development publications, as well as observations made in selected U.S. early education and teacher education classrooms. The paper focuses on the role of the dramatic and language arts in fostering peace education and conflict resolution. With regard to early education, the paper is informed by several sources, including literature on brain-based learning and multiple intelligences. Also discussed is the effective use of reflective listening, reading and storytelling, journal writing, creative drama, dramatic play, and problem-solving techniques. The report concludes that peace education strategies developed through appropriate dramatic and puppet play and other language and communication experiences can counteract the violent images depicted in the media and many children's toys. Language and literacy experiences can foster peace education and conflict resolution and play an important role in early childhood teacher education. (Contains 54 references.) (KB)

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Peace Education and Conflict Resolution Through The Expressive Arts in Early Childhood Education And Teacher Education

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I Am an Individual

I am an individual.

I have dignity and worth.

I am unique.

I deserve respect and I respect others.

I am part of the human family.

I have something special to offer the world.

I am committed to a peaceful world for all of us.

I make a difference, and so do you.

I can accomplish whatever I set out to do, and so can you.

I am the key to peace.

Naomi Drew (1987)

Introduction and Rationale

Creative drama, Readers Theater and puppetry are expressive arts which find multiple avenues for use in the early education and teacher education classroom. Based on decades of research, publications, and teaching, the authors believe that the time for wide dissemination and use of peace education and conflict resolution through language expressive strategies has arrived. This paper will explore the integration of these concepts and processes through an examination of current research and professional development publications and observations in selected early education and teacher education classrooms in the United States.

The paper will focus on the role of the dramatic and language arts in fostering peace education and conflict resolution. This paper is an extension of our work describing peace education through the creative arts and peace through the social studies presented at the 1998 Eastern Educational Research Association(EERA) and National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conferences. Teachers must use multiple sources of knowledge about child development, learning and curriculum to inform their practice. Consequently, (For this reason) sources on early childhood education, brain-based learning and multiple

intelligences, the language arts, creative drama, conflict resolution and peace and anti-violence education inform this study.

The early childhood education guidelines promulgated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age Eight (DAP) support the development of consistent, constructive, positive, collaborative relationships between children and other people. It is suggested that fostering ""both/and""thinking would present effective combinations of strategies for early childhood education and teacher education. For example, development of a child's positive self identify and respect for others with different perspectives and experiences should be fostered. This is the antithesis of bullying and teasing.

Children have both boundless curiosity and recognized development-related and age-related limits on their cognitive and linguistic capacities. Adults are encouraged to foster young children"s developing language and communication skills through environments and materials which support listening and speaking, dramatic play, dictating, drawing and writing, and beginning reading (Bredekkamp& Copple, 1997, {p. 123, 126-129}; Froschl, Sprung, & Mullin-Rindler, 1998).

The Federal document {national legislation}, Goals 2000, which presents an agenda for school reform, acknowledges a need for alternate forms of communication. Sociolinguistic and literacy research remind us that children develop language processes long before they enter school. Vygotsky's research and theories regarding the internalization of social language underscore the importance of language interactions between young children and others. Children construct the knowledge that communication can meet their needs for friendship and cultural understandings. A major premise of whole language is that literacy develops through purposeful communication in specific social and cultural situations. (U.S. Department of Education, 1994; Raines, 1995 {p. 3}; Isenberg, 1995 {p. 114}.

Dramatic/role play and other language experiences can support peaceful, cooperative interactions and conflict-free collaboration. When children are immersed in an environment which provides many opportunities to practice language skills cooperatively they become involved in a personally meaningful way. Social and affective skills such as compassion and kindness are further developed.

Brain-based Learning and Multiple Intelligences

Researchers from biology, physics, neurophysiology, psychology and phlosophy are currently studying the functions of the parts of the brain and the processes of how and where memories reside in the brain. From their explorations comes the theory of mental mapping, i.e., that the brain takes patterns it receives and builds mental maps and theories of how the world works. The theory includes the premise that individuals have some control of how and how deeply we think about information. People engage in shallow processing, for example the day the library book is due, and deep processing which explores the meanings and connotations of words, for example, the word "peace."

Journals and discussions about books being read can create a set of shared memories for a group of children and adults. The context in which the memories are formed assists in the laying down of retrieval paths which will assist in the recall and application of the memories. Language, literacy and dramatic activities that make connections to prior learning, such as those described below, will create complex neural highways and lead to new connections (See Hubbard, 1996 (pp. 88-103)).

Creative drama fosters the intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. Knowledge of oneself, one's emotions, feelings, desires and needs can be gained through engaging in drama experiences. They also facilitate one's ability to "read" and act upon knowledge of the moods, motivations, desires and temperaments of others. Dramatic play also requires symbolic thought, an increasing ability to use objects and actions to represent something else.

Creativity

Creativity may be characterized as a lifelong and natural process by which individuals journey to new places in their exploration, understanding, and experience of life (Goldberg, 1997 (p. 55). This definition of creativity can link to definitions of peace education which highlight care, concern and commitment (Reardon, 1988 (p. xx-xxi)).

Language and Literacy

Language, drama and literacy activities play a major role in fostering playful, peaceful, cooperative classrooms. They may be used as: (1) school-based activities for learning such basic language skills as reading, writing, listening and speaking and (2) responses to teasing and bullying. Literacy development

happens within relationships, therefore the personal interactions in the activities detailed below take on greater meaning.

In many states, children are currently being prepared for "core-knowledge" standardized tests in the language arts, including reading. Peace-related language activities develop the higher-order thinking skills necessary to compete successfully on these tests.

Listening and Speaking:

Discussion Starters model ways in which disagreements can lead to discussion. A sample dialogue is presented to the group, and students are asked to contribute their ideas. One example utilizes a "Talking Stick" to denote the person whose turn it is to speak. The teacher-developed scenario is a discussion involving the most important safety rules for the playground and the children's favorite outdoor play activities. Brainstorming is another useful technique for group involvement in conflict resolution (Kreidler & Whittal, 1999 {p. 3-18; 3-19}; Drew, 1987 {p. 49}).

Reflective Listening

Listening with complete attention to the person who is speaking and repeating what was said in one's own words, is an important skill for everyone. People feel affirmed when others respond in this way. They listen better to what the other person says when it is that person's turn to speak. The Pop-Up Listening activity allows children to practice the roles of careful listener and designated speaker, which are important in every classroom community (Drew, 1987 {p. 45-47}; Kreidler & Whittal 1999{pp. 3-12}).

A Peace Table provides a designed physical space in the environment for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through discussion. One version in the literature utilizes a decorated felt blanket placed on the floor. The parties to the disagreement are seated around the Peace Table to engage in problem-solving (Smith, 1993 {p. 141}). Others allocate an area of the room, a desk or a table to which the participants may go to work on the conflict together, with or without adult intervention.

Reading and Storytelling

Esther, a teacher at Downtown Alternative School (DAS) in Toronto, used the securirtty developed through Peacemaking to support cooperartive learning and development of reading skills. She began by involving the struggling readers in sharing their favorite books using choral reading. In the

beginning, her voice was the loudest, and children joined it at their own pace. She enabled her students to progress by providing a "safety net" of strategies learned through Peacemaking, such as avoiding derogatory remarks or laughing at those whose pace was slower. At the end of two years, the children in this group were reading at or above grade level.

Leo Lionni's books present diverse methods of solving conflicts. In It's Mine, a storm makes the frogs aware of the benefits of sharing. The title character in Swimmy turns his diversity into an asset as he assists his group of little fish in resolving their conflict with a big fist. The Knight and the Dragon (by Tomie de Paolo) depicts a librarian assisting a reluctant knight and a reluctant dragon to peacefully resolve their conflict. They cooperatively open a restaurant which uses both of their talents. Each of these books could form the foundation of an integrated thematic mini-unit (Fine, et al., 1995; Swinarsky, et. Al, 1999 (p. 181)).

The Persona Dolls used in the Anti-Bias Curriculum represent the personal stories of students in the class. Each doll and his or her verbal portrait introduced to the entire group and then placed in the dramatic play area. Children are encouraged to use the dolls in their sociodramatic play and their journal writing (Derman-Sparks et.al., 1989 (pp. 16-19, 146-148)).

Enactment of a story, also called interpretive drama, uses an author's ideas and words, rather than those of the actor. As the children enact their roles, they are required to think critically about how the characters differ from themselves. This facilitates divergent thinking (Goldberg, 1997 (pp. 65-55)). The story drama can enhance children's oral language and literacy learning, and serves as a bridge to creative and formal drama.

Writing

A Peace Journal is a place where each person can express their ideas, thoughts and feelings about peacemaking (Drew, 1987 (pp. 67-68)). The Peace Journal can be a concrete means of making the language arts curriculum relevant to students' everyday lives. Through the Journal, individuals can discover problem solutions and save them in prose, poetry or drawing. Teacher and student can correspond with each other without the restrictions of time and space imposed by face-to-face communication. With the advent of the computer internet, journal responses may be sent via email, as well as on paper. Another

aspect of the incorporation of the written word is the poetry written in the Downtown Alternative School children's own hand which appears in two topical books on peace published by the school.

Communication:

Children and adults can use their hands to dramatize stories without speaking. Smith's (1993) (p,. 45) Hand Pictures demonstrate a method of communicating with the hands, arm and fingers. Volunteers act out an animal, person or action. Others in the group guess that is happening or depicted by the emotions.

Dramatic Play, Creative Drama and Sociodrama

Nellie McCaslin has written that drama is the art which most fully involves the participant intellectually, emotionally, physically, verbally and socially. She contends that as children assume the roles of people different from themselves, they become sensitive to differing values and problems. Through participating in this *communal art,* they learn that each individual is necessary to the whole in a cooperative effort (McCaslin, 1996 (p. 4)).

Drama experiences can help meet the twin educational goals of students who are able to communicate effectively with all persons in our multicultural society and who value and celebrate linguistic diversity. Research has demonstrated that drama programs increase oral language fluency and English language proficiency in children of color and English as Second Language (ESL) students (Machado, 1999)p. 143}; Saldana, 1995 (p. 24)). However, younger ESL children may use simpler oral language and more "body language" in play until they are able to find the English words needed to communicate their ideas.

The teacher can facilitate the development of cooperative play through modeling appropriate language while participating in the activity. Teacher scaffolding can assist children in stretching their knowledge of roles, materials and vocabulary. Adult participation can extend social interaction and celebrate dramatic play (Davidson, 1996 (p. 38, 42-44)). All of these adult activities can support development of peace-related concepts.

Dramatic play, also called pretend, fantasy or symbolic play, begins around age two. It is object-oriented role play which fosters the use of imagination. Research shows that pretend play, and later

creative drama, increases memory and flexible thinking, expands vocabulary, enriches language and enhances children's ability to reason with contradictory facts (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997 (p. 56)).

Sociodramatic play, which involves two or more children communicating verbally about the play episode, is person-oriented. Such play enables children to inventively use sound and language to represent the people, objects and events that make up their world. International research has shown that sociodramatic play correlates highly with a child's intellectual and social abilities (Smilansky in Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997 (p. 57); Edwards, 1997 (pp, 170-173)). Drama activities enhance learning by helping students to discover things about themselves through working with others. In creative drama, children spontaneously invent, enact and interpret familiar experiences for themselves (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997 (p. 171)). The shared experiences foster teamwork and cooperation.

Pantomiming, improvising, and writing and acting scenes require fluent, flexible, original and elaborative ways of thinking. Acting further requires curiosity, taking risks and imagination (Heller, 1995 (pp. 13-14)). Pantomime involves the entire body in telling an unspoken story. Saldana indicates that the research relating the proficiency of a child of color in communicating ideas nonverbally to cultural or ethnic background is mixed. It is suggested that a knowledge of cultural dynamics can lead to understanding and dialogue. (Saldana, 1995 (pp. 28-29); Smith, 1993 (p. 54, Guess What Happened!)). Improvisation can demonstrate knowledge learning and nurture critical analysis. Older children who have had many creative drama experiences can move on to the creation of formal play scripts.

Heller devised a ten step process, based on Wasserman's guidelines for group work, to guide formal dramatic experiences. The process includes an explanation of the use of drama for learning and showing what they know, a content review, explanations of the activity and the roles, setting limits, participation in the activity and the roles, and debriefing (Heller, 1995 (pp. 19-24)).

It is important to note that the type of drama experience prepared for a group of children should be suitable for their developmental stages. Appropriate dramatic activities complement other modes of peace education.

Conflict Resolution

The use of conflict resolution with young children must be viewed from a developmental perspective. Three and four year-olds are often egocentric, seeing things only from their own point of view. Five and six year- olds are beginning to work cooperatively and often experience competition for the first time. Seven and eight year-olds need a "win-win" solution to a disagreement in order to "save face" in front of their peers (See Drew, 1987 (pp. 41-43 Win/Win Guidelines)).

Research has identified the strategy and open-ended problem-solving approaches as two basic ways to teach conflict resolution skills to young children. These approaches involve the children in sharing, taking turns, and following specific steps, initially under adult guidance, to arrive at a solution (Kreidler & Whittal, 1999 (p. 8-2-8-3)).

The Talk It Out Together Process developed by the Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) Early Childhood training team utilizes Peace Puppets made of socks, wooden blocks or envelopes to solve dramatized (sample scripts are provided) or actual conflict situations. Class Puppets and Us Puppets are Levin's adaptation of this technique for younger children. She suggests beginning with simple stick puppets and issues that are not highly emotional or volatile. This permits children to develop skills for and enjoyment in using the puppets prior to the inclusion of peace education activities (Kreidler & Whittal, 1999 (p. 8-16-8-36); Levin, 1994 (pp. 137-142)).

Responses to Teasing and Bullying

All of the problem-solving techniques highlighted by Froschl, Sprung, & Mullin-Rindler in the publication Quit It! include one or more language arts: (1) Children's literature (taken from any of the references in this paper, for example: Hinitz in Nuba, et.al and Froschl, Sprung, & Mullin-Rindler) provides a springboard to discussion of diverse ways to approach conflicts; (2) Puppets engage children (and adults) directly in problem-solving through dramatic scenarios; (3) Role-plays provide practice in problem-solving and highlight gender-equity issues; (4) Stop-action stories employ listening and speaking skills, as well as innovation. Children can provide appropriate solutions to the problem. During an integrated unit they work in small and large groups to create ways of sharing the resulting possible solutions. Pre-service teachers and

children, can create props and story boards to facilitate their practice of real-life situations; (5)Vignettes can be used with cooperative learning groups. The children read and discuss these realistic stories (Froschl, et. al (1998) {pp. 89-93}).

In the United Kingdom, the Kidscape program (England, 1989) which includes role play, puppetry, storytelling and discussion, designed to protect children from a variety of dangers, and Action Against Bullying (Johnstone, et al., Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1992), an anti-violence program for schools, combine curriculum ideas with policymaking strategies (Swiniarski, et. al, 1999 {pp. 150-151}).

School-based Activities Related to Peacemaking

Children and teachers at the Downtown Alternative School (DAS) in Toronto, Canada use language as an integral part of their ongoing peacemaking activities. The children are encouraged to write stories and poems which depict their personal thoughts about the peacemaking process and their roles as peacemakers. These might be factual or fictional. For a school/community festival, some of the children's poetry was set to music and sung by their Peaceosaurus Chorus. The children designed and constructed giant puppets from "found" (recycled) materials, fabricated costumes and produced a play about Peacemaking (Fine, et al., 1995 {pp. 21-31, 57-67}).

Violence and Media-Linked Toys

Wasserman says "Please don't aim that machine gun at me!" when discussing our right to omit from the classroom items that are offensive to personal taste or aesthetics. In this category she includes toys of violence and destruction, and *junk* toys. In their stead, she suggests "materials that raise aesthetic appreciation and offer peaceful alternatives to mayhem and killing." (Wasserman, 1990 {pp. 70-71}).However, many teachers experience anxiety and frustration when confronted with violent and warlike play. Some compromise by prohibiting the use of commercially produced toy weapons and child-constructed replicas, but allowing aggressive games. They are also aware of the subterfuge children will engage in when confronted by adults who forbid weapon fabrication. Violent play which imitates media characters and content brings up issues that are rarely adequately resolved. Containing such play is only a *stopgap measure.* Children need help from their teachers in working through the issues raised.

Children need adult help both in learning how to engage in developmentally appropriate play and in nonviolent social interactions. Class discussion can facilitate constructive, peaceful play. Expression of diverse discussion ideas must be accepted in order to create an atmosphere of safety. When possible, the discussion should produce a concrete course of action. The teacher can guide the use of more open-ended, less realistic toys. The children can be assisted in elaborating the content of their play beyond its violent focus, perhaps through suggestions of alternate appealing content. The teacher should work to actively combat the violent lessons children learn from the media, by expressing concern about, rather than condemning this type of play (Corbett in Mayesky, 1998 {p. 214}; Levin, 1994 {pp. 89-90, 96}; Levin, 1998 {pp. 52-55}).

The teacher may need to assist children in discerning what in the media is pretend and what is real. When children see Power Rangers and Ninja Turtles on television and then in shopping malls, they become confused. Asking questions about what the children think is pretend and real in the media opens doors to further discussion and develops more critical thinking. Levin suggests that children be guided through the production of a simple media production on video tape. They can draw or write the script, include sound and other special effects and then review their work on the screen (Levin, 1998 {pp. 57-61}.

Summary and Conclusions

Neuroscientific research (on brain-based learning and multiple intelligences) supports the contention that a stimulating social environment produces a thicker and more effective cortex(Stomfay-Stitz & Hinitz, 1998, Feb.). The implication is that children should begin to develop problem solving strategies in their early years, and continue the process throughout their lifetime.

Dramatic and sociodramatic play experiences support emerging literacy. Peace education strategies developed through appropriate dramatic and puppet play and other language and communication experiences can counteract the plethora of violent images depicted in the media and many children's toys.

Children's literature can be used as a medium for developing the peaceful classroom, through extensions into other experiences and areas of the integrated early education curriculum. In addition, many of the activities described in this paper can be used by parents and others outside of the school or center setting. Language and literacy experiences can serve as a vehicle to foster peace education and conflict

resolution. Peace education and conflict resolution strategies play an important role in early childhood teacher education. They can be developed through creative drama and other language and literacy activities.

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